

Message Text

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PAGE 01 HONG K 08077 260818Z
ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EB-08 /021 W
-----042887 260931Z /17

R 260207Z JUN 78
FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG
TO USDA/FAS WASHDC
INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 1101
USLO PEKING

UNCLAS HONG KONG 8077

TOFAS 143

FROM AG OFFICER

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAGR
SUBJECT: PRC: FIRST REPORTS OF THE 1978 RAPESEED HARVEST

REPORT NO. HK-8026; CODE 6AL

1. FOUR OF CHINA'S SEVEN LEADING PRODUCERS OF RAPESEED HAVE REPORTED LARGE INCREASES IN OUTTURN. YIELD AND OUTPUT WERE SAID TO BE RESPECTIVELY 40 PERCENT AND 90 PERCENT ABOVE 1977 IN CHEKIANG, SETTING A NEW RECORD (HANGCHOW, 6/21/78). HUPEH HARVESTED 70 PERCENT TO 80 PERCENT MORE RAPESEED THAN LAST YEAR (WUHAN, #/10.78 AND NCNA, 6/11.78). A "GREAT BUMPER HARVEST" WAS GATHERED ON A RECORD 384,200 HECTARES IN HUNAN (CHANGSHA, 4/19/78 AND 6/13/78). OUTTURN ON THE 200,000 HECTARES OF RAPESEED WAS CLAIMED TO BE UP BY 50 PERCENT IN KIANGSU (NANCHANG, 5.18.78). THE ACREAGE SOWN TO RAPESEED WAS OVER 20 PERCENT GREATER THAN LAST YEAR IN HUNAN AND KIANGSI (PEOPLE'S DAILY, 9/11/77). ANOTHER MAJOR PRODUCER, KIANGSU, REPORTED THAT THE RAPESEED CROP WAS GROWING BETTER THIS YEAR (NANKING, 3/11/78). THE REMAINING MAJOR PRODUCERS -- ZECHWAN AND HUNNAN -- HAVE NOT

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ON THIS YEAR'S RAPESEED CROP AS YET.

2. ANHWEI, A RELATIVELY MINOR PRODUCER, REPORTED A RECORD OUTTURN (HONEI, #/17/78). NONE OF THE OTHER LESS IMPORTANT GROWERS HAVE

ISSUED A HARVEST REPORT. OUTTURN PROBABLY FAILED TO MATCH THE GOOD 1977 CROP IN KWANGTUNG AND FUKIEN DUE TO THE COOL, DAMP, CLOUDY WEATHER THAT PREVAILED OVER THE TWO PROVINCES THROUGHOUT MOST OF THE SPRING AND EARLY SUMMER.

3. SIGNIFICANTLY, CHEKIANG IS THE ONLY MAJOR PRODUCER OF RAPESEED

TO CLAIM A RECORD OUTTURN DESPITE THE VERY LARGE INCREASES THAT HAVE BEEN REPORTED. THIS SUGGESTS THAT THE ACREAGE OF RAPESEED MAY NOT HAVE REGAINED THE LEVEL OF THE EARLY 1970'S AND THAT GROWING CONDITIONS, WHILE MUCH IMPROVED OVER LAST YEAR, WERE NOT OVERLY FAVORABLE. THIS IS ALSO AN INDICATION OF HOW SERIOUSLY DEPRESSED THE OUTTURN OF RAPESEED MUST HAVE BEEN LAST YEAR. FOR EXAMPLE, THE CROP THIS YEAR WAS SAID TO BE ONLY COMPARATIVELY GOOD IN HUPEH DESPITE A 70 TO 80 PERCENT INCREASE IN OUTPUT.

4. KIANGSI, HUNAN, AND HUPEH HAVE REPORTED SIZEABLE INCREASES IN ACREAGE. THE CLAIM OF A 40 PERCENT INCREASE IN YIELD COUPLED WITH A 90 PERCENT INCREASE IN PRODUCTION INDICATES A MUCH LARGER RAPESEED ACREAGE IN CHEKIANG AS WELL. WHILE A PART OF THE IMPROVED OUTTURN OF RAPESEED IN THOSE PROVINCES THAT HAVE REPORTED THUS FAR IS ATTRIBUTABLE TO INCREASED ACREAGE, HIGHER YIELDS CLEARLY ACCOUNT FOR MOST OF THE INCREASE.

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5. RAPESEED NORMALLY ACCOUNTS FOR ABOUT ONE-THIRD OF CHINA'S OUTPUT OF OILSEEDS (EXCLUDING SOYBEANS AND COTTONSEED). THUS, THE IMPROVED OUTTURN OF RAPESEED, EVEN IF THE CROP AS A WHOLE IS ONLY COMPARATIVELY GOOD, MAY ALLEVIATE CHINA'S NEED TO IMPORT VEGETABLE OIL. THE RESPITE, HOWEVER, COULD BE TEMPORARY SHOULD GROWING CONDITIONS DETERIORATE FOR THE BALANCE OF THIS YEAR'S HARVEST OF OILSEEDS.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: REPORTS, AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 26 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 jan 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978HONGK08077
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780264-0504
Format: TEL
From: HONG KONG
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780621/aaaaasdw.tel
Line Count: 102
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 82221782-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 29 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2213294
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: PRC: FIRST REPORTS OF THE 1978 RAPESEED HARVEST REPORT NO. HK-8026; CODE 6AL
TAGS: EAGR
To: AGR
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/82221782-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014